

**AGENDA ITEM III**

**PROPOSED LETTER OF INTENT**

**NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY**

**B.S. IN UNIFIED PUBLIC SAFETY AND ADMINISTRATION**

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##### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The University's intention is to create a baccalaureate program of this title with five areas of concentration: Emergency Medical, Fire Service (not science), Law Enforcement, Wildlife and Fisheries, and Corrections. It also intends to articulate this curriculum with courses in the LCTCS and offer the curriculum on-line.

##### **STAFF ANALYSIS**

###### 1. Consistency with Role, Scope, and Mission

According to the *Master Plan for Public Postsecondary Education: 2001*, Northwestern State University (NWSU) is to "offer a wide range of baccalaureate programs and will be committed to graduate education through the master's degree." The plan also notes that "distance education continues to become an increasingly integral part of Northwestern's role in delivering degree programs."

Consistent with this role, scope, and mission statement, the proposed program is projected to articulate closely with courses taught in the community and technical college system to the point that it is stated to be an "extension" of them. Moreover, the proposed on-campus program would also be offered on-line.

###### 2. Unnecessary Duplication

There are no other public postsecondary programs in Louisiana of this particular type at the baccalaureate level. The staff however notes the following:

- a) Two of the proposed concentrations (Law Enforcement and Corrections) are in the general field of Criminal Justice. There are numerous Criminal Justice programs in the state. Those in closest proximity are at Grambling and UL-Monroe.
- b) The concentration in Fire Services would be proximate to the Certificate in Fire Science and the A.A.S. program in Fire and Emergency Services at LSU-Eunice. LSUE also offers a certificate in Arson Investigation. It is likely that a proposed program could articulate closely with these courses and programs.

- c) The concentration in Wildlife and Fisheries would be proximate to the B.S. in Wildlife Conservation at Louisiana Tech.
- d) The concentration in Emergency Medical would be most proximate to diploma programs in EMT/Paramedic at LTC-Alexandria and LTC-Delta-Ouachita.

### 3. Consistency with Desegregation Settlement Agreement

The Desegregation Settlement Agreement did not provide for the development of an undergraduate program in Unified Public Safety Administration at any of the state's predominantly black institutions. Hence, the projected program appears to be consistent with mandates of that Agreement.

### 4. Consistency with Criteria for Funding

The University claims that it only needs to hire one additional full-time faculty with expertise in Fire Science to offer the program. Funds for this position will be provided by internal reallocations. No new state funds are currently requested.

## **STAFF SUMMARY**

It appears that this Letter of Intent fulfills all four criteria for approval, so the staff does recommend approval. However, should a proposal be forthcoming, the staff has concerns about the nature and structure of this degree which it might be useful to share in advance:

- a. Undergraduate public safety administration programs of the umbrella type, i.e. those which gather a number of different specialties under one curricular roof, are found most often at for-profit proprietary schools offering their curricula entirely on-line. This suggests that the academy has yet to embrace this particular curricular approach.
- b. The broad nature of the projected program and the lack of supporting certificate- and associate-level programs at the University will require that any forthcoming proposal be coordinated closely with existing related programs at proximate campuses. While such collaboration is to be encouraged, the staff cautions as to the difficulties that will arise in making such arrangements workable.
- c. In general, undergraduate programs in the proposed concentration areas take the form of separate and distinct degrees. This is currently the most desirable curricular pattern, as defined by associated national programmatic accreditations (e.g. Fire Protection and Safety Technology at Oklahoma State). As such programs are considered to be essential public health/safety concerns, the Regents are likely to require specific accreditation for each concentration area.

- d. The current structure of the proposed concentrations does not conform to Board of Regents policy regarding approved academic terms and degree designations.
- e. Funding for the Program Director position might not be forthcoming, which would preclude program development entirely.

***STAFF RECOMMENDATION***

***The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee grant approval for the proposed Letter of Intent for a projected B.S. program in Unified Public Safety Administration (CIP Code 30.9999) at Northwestern State University. Any forthcoming proposal submitted as a result of this Letter of Intent shall address concerns expressed in the staff summary.***